

A ZHUANGZIAN ETHIC OF OPENNESS AND

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JOSEPH EMMANUEL D. STA. MARIA

ABSTRACT

In this article, I wish to show that Dr. Agustin Rodriguez's idea of how government institutions in Philippine society should practice "hospitality" towards the marginalized Other, resonates with and can be complemented by a personal ethic of openness and hospitality drawn from the Daoist work *Zhuangzi*. According to Rodriguez, poor Filipinos living in urban areas, tend to be misunderstood and marginalized by the rest of the well-to-do class. The reason for this is that these poor live out an alternative rationality or way of life as compared to that of the elite. This marginalized rationality finds it difficult to fit in the systems and institutions of the city, which belong to the dominant elite rationality. For Rodriguez, this state of affairs is unjust and cannot continue if Philippine society is ever to achieve wholeness. He thus recommends that the governmental institutions of the country practice hospitality towards the marginalized Other. This means that

these institutions should provide space for the Other to be genuinely heard and be given a chance to substantially affect social policy. Now, the *Zhuangzi* also promotes openness and accommodation to the unconventional, and I believe that this can complement Rodriguez's notion of hospitality. Specifically, I believe that whereas Rodriguez's hospitality applies to the institutional level, Zhuangzian openness and hospitality applies to the personal level, or to the level of an individual's own attitude and dispositions.

In the introduction to his book *Governing the Other*, Dr. Agustin Rodriguez stressed the importance of creating governmental processes that would be hospitable to the people that belong to the marginalized rationality, when it comes to establishing a truly just Philippine society. In this article, I wish to complement Rodriguez's view by suggesting that the change towards accommodating the marginalized rationality should not only be done at the level of governmental processes, but also at the individual level of the person's own disposition or attitude. More specifically, I propose that a personal ethic of openness and, precisely, hospitality towards the Other can be drawn from the philosophical resources of the Daoist text *Zhuangzi*. This in turn can serve as the "individual" counterpart of Rodriguez's "institutional" vision of hospitality towards the marginalized rationality. My article will thus be divided into two main parts. In

the first part I will give a summary of Rodriguez's philosophy of hospitality to the marginalized and the corollary idea that governmental institutions in the Philippines should practice this hospitality in order to establish a more just society. In the second part, I will give a rough sketch of the aforesaid personal ethic of openness and hospitality based upon the themes found in the *Zhuangzi*. I will then conclude this paper with a brief remark on how Rodriguez's idea of hospitality at the institutional level and the Zhuangzian personal ethic of openness and hospitality can be brought together towards accommodating the marginalized rationality.

Rodriguez on Hospitality towards the Marginalized Other

In the introduction to *Governing the Other*, Rodriguez meditates on why in particular the poor Filipinos in the city appear to be ungovernable. He says that it is because these people have their own rationalities or ways of thinking, which are different from the dominant rationality of the urban upper class that tries to govern them (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 4). He also states that the dominant rationality of the city and the laws that are created based on this rationality are things which the poor do not understand or recognize as something beneficial for themselves. They had no hand in creating such laws and merely see them as an imposition on their way of life which they must conform to lest they be punished. The dominant urban class, on the other hand, does not recognize the otherness of the poor and that the latter's rationality

can be a legitimate way of life. They continually attempt to “convert” the poor into their own rationality and if the poor resist they punish them for doing so. This results in the poor being marginalized and continually pushed towards the “nowhere” spaces of the city—spaces that Rodriguez argues the dominant rationality finds hard to reach because they are not ideally livable.

A concrete example that Rodriguez gives to show this marginalization of the poor and their rationality, is the campaign against sidewalk vendors that Bayani Fernando launched in 2002. The sidewalk, according to Rodriguez, is a “nowhere” space which the dominant elite rationality considers unimportant since supposedly nothing significant really happens there. Because of this, the influence of the dominant rationality often is not as strong there as in other places. In other words, the sidewalks are spaces which are not often regulated by the national authorities. Consequently, these spaces are also those in which the poor and their marginalized rationality thrive. As Rodriguez says:

Here [the sidewalks] the marginalized find their dignity as persons. It is their world, with rules and structures that they themselves have created according to the rules of conduct and laws of commerce known only to them and recognized only by them because these were defined by them. They negotiate among themselves the use of space, the hierarchy of persons, the honor system, and the etiquette of being of the sidewalk... these unwritten laws, these rules of

collective existence are rules negotiated among stakeholders without the intervention of formal systems from outside of the sidewalk community. Thus the sidewalk is a nowhere, a thriving world that hosts the nobodies of society.(p. 7)

However, this nowhere space of the sidewalks was “remembered” one day by the dominant rationality (p. 8). To be sure, the government had always conducted occasional raids on the sidewalks in order to clear them of the poor vendors and their wares. The poor in turn had learned to accept these raids as part of their lives and had also learned how adapt to it, so that they knew how to return to the sidewalks even after such raids were conducted. Bayani Fernando’s campaign though was different. It was meant to permanently scare off the vendors from the sidewalks. Consequently, the tactics used in the campaign were particularly brutal, especially from the perspective of the vendors. The goods that these vendors were selling were not merely confiscated but were doused with gasoline and burned. The vendors themselves were treated with extreme force, to the point that a substantial number of them sustained serious physical injury and even three died (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 5). For Rodriguez, this campaign was analogous to a “colonization” of the vendors and their sidewalks. That is, it was a negation of their being and their way of life. It was the refusal of the dominant rationality to recognize their alternative rationality. From the viewpoint of the dominant elite rationality, clearing the sidewalks was necessary for

the faster distribution of goods which would ultimately contribute to national economic progress (p. 8). Anything that got in the way of this progress should be disposed of, even annihilated. And this indeed was what was made manifest by the campaign, particularly the destruction of the vendors' goods. By destroying their goods, the government was symbolically and literally eviscerating even the chance of these vendors to return to their livelihood once the raids ceased—similar to how invading armies would spray salt on the lands of their enemies so that their crops would no longer grow and recovery would be impossible (p. 6).

For Rodriguez, this negation of the poor's way of life and rationality is inherently unjust and the Filipino people cannot hope to have wholeness in their society, which consist of multiple rationalities, if this continues (p. 20). He thus suggests that this situation be rectified by creating governmental processes that treat the marginalized other and its rationality with hospitality. Indeed, the very reason why the poor are driven to the sidewalks in the first place (and afterwards punished for being there) is that urban institutions acutely fail in being accommodating or hospitable to them. As Rodriguez says:

Many of these vendors cannot be accommodated by the formal structures of urban society, although many of them dream of becoming integrated members of this society either as factory workers, office personnel, or government employees. Actually, their ambition to tap into the Manila dream is not so high. They merely

want work which can absorb them into systems that guarantee income, security of tenure, stability, respectability, and the semblance of belonging and contributing to the centers of power and commerce. However, because of the lack of marketable skills, or any skill that would make them unique, desirable, and indispensable...they are left at the margins of society.(p. 6)

Now, what exactly is hospitality for Rodriguez, and how does this provide a remedy for this sorry state of people being marginalized? For him, hospitality is not mere “tolerance” which is simply allowing the marginalized to live within the sphere of the dominant rationality, while the dominant rationality itself remains the same in its un-accommodation of the marginalized. Rather, hospitality requires—even demands—that “we make space by displacing ourselves, giving up our place at the center. This is an absolute or infinite demand, a radical law of decentering. Beyond tolerance, hospitality is about making space for the Other at the center of our spaces” (p. 15). In other words, in being hospitable, the dominant rationality should allow itself to be disturbed by the marginalized Other and to be reoriented so as to respond and accommodate itself to its concerns. Indeed, this means that the dominant rationality should precisely relinquish its dominance; it should not allow its own perspective and understanding of things to remain in a privileged position at the expense of other rationalities.

To be more specific in showing how governmental processes should be more hospitable to the marginalized, Rodriguez (2009) draws from Jürgen Habermas' idea of discourse politics in which the marginalized can access and participate in the activity of forming political opinion and will (p. 27). This means that avenues should be created in processes of policy-making in which the marginalized can voice and defend their opinions, and in which such opinions will be given *equal* importance with the opinion of other rationalities particularly the dominant one (pp. 11-13). These avenues should also enable the marginalized to hear out and decide on the opinion of other rationalities, so that they come to realize that they are truly part of a democratic system in which they, along with multiple stakeholders who also have their respective rationalities, have a say in shaping society and defining the common good which that society considers for itself. In order for this to happen, concrete modifications should be made. For example, the process itself of decision-making, and the language that is used for it, must be accessible and not disadvantageous for the marginalized (pp. 19-20). Although Rodriguez does not say it explicitly, what he appears to be targeting is the dominant use of English, with all its technical jargon, in official or government activities which make it difficult for the poor to truly engage in the processes of discourse and policy-making. In order to be truly hospitable, those in authority should be willing even to "turn the official language on its head to allow the Other rationalities to engage the dominant rationality and reshape its discourse (p. 20)."

A Personal Ethic of Openness and Hospitality from the *Zhuangzi*

Openness

Now as said above, I believe that a personal ethic of openness and hospitality can be drawn from the *Zhuangzi*, which both resonates with and complements Rodriguez's concept of institutional hospitality. In elaborating this personal ethic, I will first start with openness since this trait appears to be the prerequisite for hospitality. One cannot after all, provide hospitality to the Other without being open to the Other's existence and way of being. Now, a pervading theme in the *Zhuangzi* is the importance of precisely being open to alternative perspectives, such as alternative ways of doing things and alternative ways of being. The *Zhuangzi* provides several justifications for this openness, which can be divided into two kinds: the ontic justification, and the practical one. By "ontic justification" what I simply mean is that the openness to alternative perspectives is grounded on the reality of things, or how things really (*ontos*) are. The *Zhuangzi* in a number of places indicates that there is indeed a plurality or multiplicity of perspectives, by the simple reason that there is a multiplicity of beings (and therefore ways of being) in the world. For instance, in chapter two of the book, the character Wang Ni is asked whether there is a standard of rightness (*shi* 是) that all creatures can agree upon (*Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings*, 2009). Wang Ni says that he does not ultimately know, but what he observes is that different

creatures seem to have different ideas of what is right. For instance, when it comes to the right habitat, eels would prefer damp spots, and monkeys would prefer trees, while human beings would prefer neither of these places. The same applies for standards of what can be rightfully considered as edible and beautiful.

Now it might be argued that Wang Ni's example only shows a difference of perspectives in the level of species. Perhaps then there is a right perspective that all human beings, as part of one species, can unanimously agree on. However, the *Zhuangzi* also clearly shows that even between human beings, whether individually or collectively, there exists differences in perspectives and that these differences can even be difficult to reconcile with each other. Differences in perspectives between humans can be as simple as a difference in doing or using things. This can be seen in the first chapter of the *Zhuangzi* where Zhuangzi's friend Huishi says that he destroyed a gourd that he planted because the gourd was too big to be used as a dipper and water container (p. 7). Zhuangzi in response chides Huishi for his lack of openness with regard to the further possible uses of the gourd. To elaborate more on this point, Zhuangzi tells the story of a man from Song who was skilled in making a balm that prevented chapping of the hands (pp. 7-8). A customer of this man bought the formula for this balm for a hundred pieces of gold. The man from Song agreed thinking that he would earn big from the transaction. However, the customer had a different and more creative perspective when it came to using the balm. He presented the balm to the King of Wu and since

the balm was useful in aiding the latter's military battles, the customer was ultimately rewarded by being made a feudal lord. Returning to Huishi, Zhuangzi then says that he (Huishi) could have used the gourd as water vessel to float on lakes and streams, but his lack of openness to other perspectives prevented him from realizing this.

Differences in perspectives among people can also be understood more broadly as differences in moral views and commitments. This is indicated in the second chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, where the author alludes to the interminable debates of the Confucians and Mohists, wherein one side considers as right what the other considers as wrong, and vice-versa (pp. 11-12). Even more generally, difference in perspectives between people is also presented by the *Zhuangzi* as stemming from their differing ways of living or lifestyles. In the first chapter for instance, Zhuangzi, through the character of Lian Shu, remarks that a ceremonial cap salesman from the state of Song travelled to Yue but found no profit there since the people of Yue had a different culture and had no need for such caps (p. 7). There are also stories in the *Zhuangzi* about eccentric people (such as mutilated criminals and deformed human beings, people who are arguably at the margins of society) who are offered high government positions by rulers because of their apparent virtuosity as seen in the story of Duke Ai and "Horsehead Humpback" (pp. 35-37). However these people reject the offer even though from a conventional point of view, or from the view of those who offer these things, such positions are most

valuable. From these it can be seen that the differences in ways of life among peoples consequently lead to different perspectives, especially regarding the value of things.

Considering the above then, it seems clear that the *Zhuangzi* portrays the world as one in which there is indeed a multiplicity of perspectives stemming from the fact that creatures have their own unique ways of being. The *Zhuangzi* also implies that the refusal to be open to this multiplicity of differing perspectives is a kind of deficiency that “obstructs” one from knowledge of the true state of things. This is alluded to by Zhuangzi’s final remark to Huishi in the story cited above; Zhuangzi says that Huishi still has a lot of weeds “clogging” up his mind (p. 8). It is this “clog” that prevents Huishi from “seeing,” as it were, the fact that there are further possible uses for his gourd. The debates between the Confucians and the Mohist are also considered a result of the dao being “obscured” (p. 11). Arguably what this means is that the perpetual disagreements between the Confucians and Mohist is the product of their obstinate refusal to be open to alternative perspectives. But this refusal to be open ultimately means that they do not know or see the true “way (dao)” of things which is that there is indeed a multiplicity of (legitimate) points-of-views which are not necessarily reconcilable—such a fact is “obscured” for them. The character Lian Shu mentioned above also considers the refusal of his friend Jian Wu to acknowledge the possibility of there being truth in the story of the “madman” Jieyu, as a kind of blindness and deafness of the mind (p. 7). It thus appears that for the writers

of the *Zhuangzi* openness to alternative perspectives and ways of being is simply the proper corresponding attitude when it comes to interacting with a reality that *actually has* a plurality of perspectives and ways of being. As such, openness to perspectives appears to be a good in itself that people should strive to attain and maintain. However, as is characteristic of Chinese philosophy, the practical justification of openness also figures significantly for the writers of the *Zhuangzi*.

For the writers of the *Zhuangzi* openness to alternative perspectives is justified in the practical realm due to the benefits that it can provide for one's self and others, or to say it in another way, benefits it can provide for the individual and for the society. The benefit that openness provides to the individual can come in various ways. It can help a person improve his socio-economic standing as seen in Zhuangzi's story of the balm, where openness to alternative ways of utilizing the balm led the customer to ultimately become a feudal lord, while the original maker of the balm remained in his modest station in life. Openness can also provide psychological benefits by helping a person maintain equanimity in times when circumstances might not go according to his own perspective of what is good (cf. Fraser, 20140). This can be seen in the story about the monkey trainer and his monkeys, found in chapter two of the *Zhuangzi* (p. 14). The monkey trainer tells his monkeys that they would get a ration of three nuts in the morning and four nuts in the evening. The monkeys were angered at this and so the monkey keeper decided to give them four nuts in

the morning and three nuts in the evening instead, to which the monkeys delightedly agreed. In this anecdote, the monkeys felt outrage because of how things did not go according to their strict view of what was good for them. On the other hand, the monkey trainer appeared to take things calmly even when his proposal, or his view, was rejected, and he adapted accordingly. In the end however, both the perspective of the monkeys and the monkey trainer amounted to the same number of nuts, and so the only difference was in the emotional response of both parties. The monkey trainer can be said though to have ultimately ended up in the better state since he did not allow emotional upheaval to disturb his peace. And this in turn was due to his detachment with regard to his own perspective, and the concomitant openness he had to alternative ones. The equanimity that openness can produce is more dramatically illustrated by the story of Ziyu's death in the sixth chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. In this story, Ziyu falls terminally ill in such a way that his entire body becomes discombobulated. Despite this though, his "mind was relaxed and unbothered" (p. 45). Ziyu then explains to his friend Ziji that he (Ziyu) is content with what has happened because he is open to the possibilities of what might become of him after death—perhaps his left arm will become a rooster which heralds the coming of the dawn, or his right hand might become a crossbow pellet that can be used to hunt owls. In other words, Ziyu did not allow himself to be limited by the arguably conventional perspective that death is the end of everything. By not clinging to this perspective and the negative value it imputes to death, he found and maintained his peace.

Finally, the authors of the *Zhuangzi* also show that openness can benefit an individual by helping ensure that individual's physical survival in the world. This is implied in the story of Yan Hui's fasting of his mind. In this anecdote, Yan Hui desires to reform the prince of Wei of the latter's corrupt ways. Hui informs his master Confucius about his plan, but Confucius replies cynically that he (Hui) will just get himself killed. Confucius then states the ways that this can happen. He says that Hui might simply incense the prince by his display of, and sermons about, virtue. Hui then responds by further elaborating his plans to reform the prince, such as being "punctilious in bearing but also humble," being "internally upright but externally adaptable," and citing "preexisting doctrines from antiquity" (pp. 25-26). Still, Confucius shoots all these plans down and says that Hui is like a ruler with so many policies but with no "foreign intelligence," and that he is still "taking his mind as... [his] instructor" (p. 26). Confucius then tells Hui to fast his mind to the point that he will only be able to hear, no longer with his ears and mind, but with *qi*— the vital energy often conceived of as air (pp. 215-216). Confucius further says that *qi* is empty and simply waits "for the presence of beings" (p. 27). It is in this emptiness then that *dao* will gather. It is thus by undergoing this fast that Hui, as the anecdote seems to imply, is able to succeed in his mission.

In this anecdote it can be seen that Hui is initially immersed in his own preconceived notions, with regard to dealing with the prince. As Confucius remarks though, this reliance on his own

perspective will likely get Hui killed. By simply planning to impose his views on the prince, and not trying to be open to the actual situation he is getting himself into (what Confucius arguably alludes to by his remark that Hui lacks “foreign intelligence”), Hui will only anger the wayward ruler and court his own death. Confucius’ advice of fasting the mind though appears to be a remedy to this. Fasting the mind appears to be an emptying of the mind of its usual contents, that is to say, of the perspective that it clings to, similar to how normal fasting is an emptying of the stomach of what one usually eats. By emptying the mind of its usual perspective(s), one then is able to have a much more open appreciation of things, without being influenced by preconceived notions. This is represented by what Confucius says, namely, that fasting of the mind results in listening to one’s qi. Now since qi, like air, is empty or vacuous it does not impose its own form upon things. Rather it conforms to things, similar to how air conforms to the shape of things (cf. Slingerland, 2003). By listening to qi then, one is able to attain an openness and conformity to, the “things-in-themselves, the patterned interrelationship of which constitutes the Dao” (Slingerland, 2003, p. 184). To put it alternatively in the words of Alan Fox, fasting of the mind appears to “involve some sort of phenomenological *epoché*, in which one loosens one’s commitment to a particular sense of things.... [and which consequently] requires conforming to an...array of situational variables” (Fox, 2015, p. 61). It is then through this fasting that Hui succeeds in his mission. This in turn is how the author of the

anecdotes shows that it is through openness of mind that one might have a greater chance of survival in the world, because of avoiding precisely those conflicts that arise due to unscrupulously clinging to one's own perspective.

Now, aside from benefiting the individual self, openness to perspectives is also portrayed by the authors of the *Zhuangzi* as benefiting others or society. Mostly, this benefit is presented as respecting the unique way that others exist, and not forcibly imposing upon them one's own perspective which will only likely affect them negatively. An example would be the story of the meeting between Toeless Shushan and Confucius in chapter five of the *Zhuangzi* (p. 35). In this anecdote, Shushan meets with Confucius and presumably desires to be the latter's disciple. Confucius however rejects him because of his status as a criminal, and more specifically, because of the fact that he had already lost a limb—a violation of the Confucian importance of keeping one's body free of mutilation (see also Confucius, *Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, 2003, p. 79) . Shushan though reprimands Confucius for judging him based only on these (that he was a criminal and was mutilated), and he intimates that there is something more to him than these superficial facts. Shushan also remarks that he had once thought Confucius to be like Heaven and Earth, that is to say as impartial as Heaven and Earth in including all things within it. Yet now he realizes that he was mistaken in thinking this. Shushan then meets with Lao Dan where they discuss how Confucius is, ironically, the one who is

truly fettered and punished by Heaven, arguably due to his narrowness of understanding. In this anecdote, one can see the importance of openness although in a negative way, that is, it shows the dangers of being rigidly attached to one's own particular perspective. By being confined to his own narrow perspective of things (which is arguably also the perspective of conventional society at that time) Confucius saw nothing valuable or redeemable about Shushan, and so he shunned him. This illustrates how clinging to a particular perspective might lead people towards rejecting those who have ways of being that are not valued in such a perspective, and thus these rejected ones become the victims of exclusion and marginalization.

More seriously however, the authors of the *Zhuangzi* portray the lack of openness to alternative perspectives or ways of being, as a possible cause of actual harm—and even death. In chapter nine, there is a story of Bo Le the horse tamer who in domesticating horses actually kills more than half of them by unscrupulously applying upon them his methods. The book says:

He [Bo Le] proceeds to brand them, shave them, clip them, bridle them, fetter them with crupper and martingale, pen them in stable and stall—until about a quarter of the horses have dropped dead. Then he starves them, parches them, gallops them, lines them up to neck to neck or nose to tail, tormented by bit and rein in front and by whip and spur behind. By

then over *half* of the horses have dropped dead. (pp. 60-61)

This anecdote shows how Bo Le's inability to be open to the possibility of the horses having their own unique way of existing, causes him to impose his own view of what a good horse should be on these same horses. However, this perspective of his, far from bringing benefit to these animals, actually brought hardship and death to most of them. A similar story is found in chapter 18. Here, the Earl of Lu finds a beautiful bird and brings it to the ancestral temple. In his desire to take care of the bird, he gives it meat for the sacrifice to feast on, and makes it listen to the Nine Shao music (Slingerland, 2003, p. 176). However, the bird ate no food and just became bewildered and exhausted until it died three days later. The author of the story then remarks that the bird died because the Earl tried to nourish it with what nourished himself. Again, it can be seen from this tale how the lack of openness to possible alternative ways of living caused the Earl to impose his own perspective of what is good on the bird, with fatal consequences.

Because of how openness to perspectives and different ways of life leads to the security and flourishing of things (whether animals or humans), the authors of the *Zhuangzi* also consider such openness as a crucial element of rightly governing society. Indeed, the author who wrote of the story of Bo Le ultimately considers Bo Le's actions analogous to those who govern the world. That is to say, rulers, like Bo Le, force people to go against their own unique natures because of how these rulers impose rules and regulations

on them based only on their (the rulers') own understanding or perspective (pp. 60-61). Stories in chapter seven of the *Zhuangzi* also express a similar idea. One example is the conversation between Jian Wu and Jieyu. Jieyu asked Jian Wu what he (Jian Wu) learned from Ri Zhong Shi. Jian Wu said "He told me that if a ruler can produce regulations, standards, judgments, and measures derived from the example of his own person, none will dare disobey him and all will be reformed by him" (p. 50). Jieyu retorts that such an idea is "sham Virtuosity. To rule the world in this way is like trying to carve a river out of the ocean, or asking a mosquito to carry a mountain on its back." (Zhuangzi, p. 51).⁷ It appears then that the message of this story is that governing other people by imposing on them standards that come merely from one's own perspective (or "measures derived from the example of his own person" as the story says) does violence to them because it prevents them from flourishing according to their own unique way of living. Such an imposition would be "unnatural" or against the true way of things, similar to how asking a mosquito to carry a mountain would be unnatural. Another story from chapter seven expresses this lesson more positively and explicitly. In this anecdote, Tian Gen asks a nameless man how to properly govern the world. After initially rebuffing him, the nameless man finally says that he should "follow the rightness of the way each thing already is without allowing yourself the least bias. Then the world will be in order." In other words, proper governing consists of being open to the unique ways of beings that things or people have, and not

viewing them or acting towards them based only from one's own particular perspective.

Hospitality

From all that has been said above, it seems clear that the authors of the *Zhuangzi* advocate openness of mind to alternative perspectives and ways of life. They also give a number of reasons for justifying this attitude. However, openness is not exactly the same as hospitality. As said above, hospitality requires a “de-centering,” that is, in being hospitable one should be willing to give up one's own place to accommodate the Other. Or to put it alternatively, one should be willing to accept that one's own perspective and ways of doing things are not in a privileged position, to the point that one is willing to relinquish precisely this privileged position for the sake of doing justice to the Other. Now, one can have openness of mind towards alternative perspectives and ways of doing things, without necessarily admitting that these alternatives are just as legitimate as one's own. In other words, one can have openness to the plurality of perspectives and ways of being, while still holding that one's own perspective and way of being are ultimately better than others. If such is the case, then one might be guilty of merely being tolerant and not hospitable.

Does the *Zhuangzi* then express ideas that resonate not only with openness but also hospitality? I believe that it does, specifically in the final story of the “Inner Chapters.” (See

Zhuangzi, pp. viii-xii). This is the story of Emperor Hundun. Since the story is brief, I cite it here in full:

The emperor of the southern sea was called Swoosh.
 The emperor of the northern seas was called Oblivion.
 The emperor of the middle was called Chaos [i.e.,
Hundun 渾沌] Swoosh and Oblivion would
 sometimes meet in the territory of Chaos, who always
 attended to them quite well. They decided to repay
 Chaos for his virtue. “All men have seven holes in
 them, by means of which they see, hear, eat, and
 breath,” they said. “But this one alone has none. Let’s
 drill him some.” So each day they drilled another hole.
 After seven days, Chaos was dead.(p. 54)

Initially this story appears similar to that of the bird mentioned above, and therefore might also appear to contain the same message. That is to say, the lesson of Hundun’s tale is the importance of being open to alternate perspectives and ways of being, lest harm be inflicted. It is after all due to Swoosh and Oblivion’s inability to be open to fact that Hundun exists in a manner that is different from a human being, that ultimately causes Hundun’s death. This is similar to how the Earl of Lu’s treatment of the bird as a human inevitably causes the latter’s demise. Although this way of understanding Hundun’s story is possible, other scholars believe that an alternative way of viewing the tale is by considering Hundun as an example to be emulated.

For example, Wu Kuang-ming (2007) believes Hundun's unwavering hospitality to Swoosh and Oblivion to the point of even accepting death at their hands, is an ideal principle that should be followed. Wu Kuang-ming considers Hundun to be representing—as indeed Hundun's name implies—the primordial “chaos” from which things emerge (p. 265). However, unlike in other cosmologies where this chaos is an antagonistic being to be battled against so that an ordered universe can emerge, Hundun is portrayed as being hospitable even to those people who would eventually destroy him. This shows that, for the writer of the story of Hundun, the primordial chaos is not so much a malevolent entity but more of a gentle and nourishing ground in which the myriad things are nestled and from which they grow and thrive. Perhaps a more concrete and modern illustration would be to consider Hundun as something like the biosphere which nourishes all the different creatures that are part of it, but at the same time simply allows these creatures to be their natural selves without imposing anything on them. Indeed it can be said that insofar as the biosphere nourishes all living creatures within itself, it also nourishes their *very* differences. In other words, the biosphere can be figuratively said to be “hospitable” to creatures because it not only tolerates their varying ways of life (by allowing them to emerge), but it also considers these ways of life as genuinely worth accommodating (by nourishing and helping these ways of life to develop). It is in light of these considerations that Wu Kuang-Ming considers Hundun's hospitality as an ideal to be emulated. As he

says: “Emperor Hundun is the humus allowing things to grow, the habitat in which events emerge. ‘Absolute kindness, unconditional acceptance’ is his real name then...Fulfilling this life imperative, ‘treating them very well,’ enables everyone to thrive together, without exception” (p. 278).

Similar to Wu Kuang-Ming, I also believe that Hundun’s story can be understood in a way that considers Hundun as an exemplar of being hospitable to others. However, instead of considering Hundun as a representation of primordial chaos or nature, I believe that Hundun can be more practically viewed as symbolizing the ideal human ruler or manager. This is arguably supported by the fact that Hundun’s story is located in the chapter titled “Sovereign Responses for Ruling Powers (*ying di wang* 應帝王)” which deals precisely with views on how people of authority should rule. (See Zhuangzi, p. 50). In fact the two stories about governance already mentioned above, namely the story of Jian Wu and Jieyu, and Tian Gen and the nameless man, is located in this chapter. And of course it should be remembered that all the characters in Hundun’s story, including Hundun himself, are rulers—indeed emperors (*di* 帝).

What difference though would it make if Hundun is considered as representing ideal human governing instead of primordial chaos or nature? I believe that a certain nuance with regard to the philosophy of human governance is highlighted more if Hundun is considered a paragon of human rulership. I also believe that this nuance resonates precisely with the notion of “de-centering” that

the concept of hospitality has, as mentioned above. To explain this, let me remind the reader that Hundun is depicted as the emperor of the middle or the center (*zhong* 中 and *yang* 央) (Zhuangzi, *The normal course for rulers and kings*). Now a ruler or emperor being at the “center” of things is a common notion in Ancient Chinese thought. For instance, according to Zhou ritual, the emperor has to face south when he is seated on his throne. And this is because the emperor is compared to the north star, which is unmoving and yet that which all other stars revolve around (Walsh, 2010). The point of the imagery is that the emperor or ruler, by being at the center, is the one that influences all things around it; he is the one that gives moral and social direction to the people. This is alluded to by Confucius who says that the ideal ruler should lead his subjects to virtuousness by his own moral virtue just as how, precisely, the pole star “moves” all the other stars. (See Analects 2.1 in Confucius, *Analects*, p. 8). The legalist philosophers, such as Hanfeizi, also considered the ideal ruler as the central mover of things while remaining unmoving or “actionless” (Hansen, 1992). Unlike the Confucians however, who believed that the ideal ruler moves others through moral virtue, the legalist believed that the ruler would move others effortlessly because of the strict institutional systems of reward and punishment that he would have already established (Hansen, 1992). Despite this difference though, the Confucians and Legalists share the common idea that indeed the paradigmatic ruler is one who imposes his influence on all things around him.

Now the writer of the seventh chapter of the *Zhuangzi* seems to have been aware of this common notion of the ruler as the all-influencing and dominating center of things. However, he appears to go against the rightness of this idea. This is alluded to in the story between Jian Wu and Jieyu where it is Ri Zhong Shi who teaches Jian Wu that in order to rule a kingdom, a ruler should “produce regulations, standards, judgments, and measures derived from the example of his own person” (Zhuangzi, p. 50). It is worth taking note here of Ri Zhong Shi’s name because it seems to signify that he (Ri Zhong Shi) is the ideal ruler at the center of all things. As Wang Bo says, the name Ri Zhong Shi (日中始) means:

‘Come from Sun Central,’ indicating that he is the center of the universe, radiating through all. His advice on governing is: ‘When the lord establishes principles, who among the people will not follow?’ That is to say, the ruler issues rules and standards based on his own will and requires the people to observe and obey them. This forceful procedure of getting people to follow one’s rules means to set oneself up as the center of the universe—like the sun. No one else is allowed to have a will of his own. (L. Kohn, Trans, 2014, p. 151)

However, as mentioned above, Jieyu (and ultimately the author of the story) criticizes this kind of rulership promoted and embodied by Ri Zhong Shi, as something unnatural. The story of Tian Gen

which immediately follows, can also be said to go against the idea of a central ideal authority imposing his influence upon things. Again, the nameless man in advising Tian Gen how to rule the world, tells the latter not to be some sort of central authority or influencer, but to simply “follow the rightness of the way each thing already is.”

It is in Hundun’s story however that the author of the seventh chapter of the *Zhuangzi* appears to go against the idea of a central imposing ruler the most. In this story, Hundun, *the emperor of the center*, does not impose his will upon the things and people around him. Indeed, in the absolutely opposite fashion, he treats the “people at the margins” with such great accommodation that he ultimately allows himself to be killed by them. In showing Hundun as such, the author of the story not only subverts the idea of an ideal ruler imposing his will from himself towards all things, but he inverts it. Instead of the margins conforming to the center, it is the center that conforms to the margins—even to the point of allowing itself to be annihilated. This annihilation though need not be literal death but rather a figurative one which represents giving up the claim to be the “center of the world.” In other words, Hundun’s “death” can be arguably interpreted as a kind of “dying to one’s self” that the author is promoting to his readers. This “death” entails that people, especially those in power and governance, give up their insistence that their perspective is ultimately better than others, along with the constant desire to impose this perspective on them. Instead, in governing, they should try their best to

accommodate the way of life of others even if this accommodation would lead to the loss of their own power and the chance of having their own perspective reign dominant. This then can be considered the “nuance” that is more clearly brought into emphasis by treating Hundun not simply as a representation of nature or primordial chaos, but as a paragon of human governance. That is to say, for the author of the seventh chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, it is Hundun that is actually the ideal kind of ruler which he promotes in opposition to the conventional understanding of the ruler as a central figure imposing his influence upon his subordinates. Hundun can also be arguably considered that which the title of the seventh chapter ultimately indicates, namely, the “sovereign response” the author gives for ruling powers.

More importantly however, I believe that the ideal way of governance represented by Hundun is what resonates most with the concept of hospitality defined in Rodriguez’s work. Again, hospitality demands that the dominant rationality be willing to give up its place in the center, or the privileged position of influence, in order to make room for the Other. This is done in turn so that the Other can have a genuine chance of exercising its own way of living and flourishing without being marginalized. This appears to be what Hundun precisely does. Hundun does not simply tolerate the existence of Swoosh and Oblivion. He does not merely allow these two to remain at the margins of his own territory. Rather, he allows them to meet with him in his own place, namely the center—the locus of (his) power. And in this

center, Hundun constantly treats the two “quite well” even to the point of being willing to relinquish his very existence in this center in order to accommodate them. One can even speculate that Hundun knows that Swoosh and Oblivion’s act of boring holes in his head is simply their natural response of showing gratitude. In other words, Hundun is willing to let Swoosh and Oblivion act out their unique ways of being, even if it means that his place at the center would be endangered. Considering these then, Hundun can be said to be responding to the absolute demand of hospitality which decrees that one precisely allow the Other—in all its “Otherness”—into one’s own space.

Conclusion

From all that has been said, it can be seen that Rodriguez’s “hospitality” towards the marginalized Other, and the ideas of the *Zhuangzi* concerning openness and hospitality towards alternative ways of life, do appear to resonate with and complement each other. Rodriguez and the authors of the *Zhuangzi* both consider the plurality of perspectives and ways of life as a given “fact” of the world, the denial of which could possibly lead to marginalization and violence towards beings. Thus both Rodriguez and the authors of the *Zhuangzi* promote openness to this plurality and also genuine hospitality towards it. As mentioned above though, while Rodriguez applies the idea of hospitality in the institutional level, the ideas of openness and hospitality in the *Zhuangzi* seem to operate more in the personal level or in the level of the individual’s

attitude.¹ This can easily be put together however since institutions are ultimately made up of individuals. Consequently, promoting the attitudes or “virtues” of openness and hospitality in the individual level is arguably a potent way to engender and sustain hospitality in the institutional level (Yong, 2010). Indeed, in the aforementioned seventh chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, the author appears to be aware of this idea, as particularly shown in the story of Tian Gen. Again, Tian Gen is interested in how to properly govern the world. However, the answer that the nameless man gives him has nothing to do with governmental policies. Rather, the nameless man asks Tian Gen to adopt a certain accommodating attitude towards things, and it is only then that the world will be ordered. This arguably shows that for the authors of the *Zhuangzi*, establishing a hospitable world ultimately begins with establishing the attitude of hospitality within one’s self. I believe the same can be said in the case of Philippine society.

¹ Even Hundun’s tale, which can be understood as exemplifying ideal human governance is nevertheless portrayed in the level of an individual’s action. In other words, the exemplar of the tale, Hundun, is still an individual and it is his personal attitude and action that is held up to be emulated.

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